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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses an approach to teaching third college year "bridge" courses, showing that students in a course that focuses on language and culture as well as students in an introductory course on literary analysis can benefit from using a stylistic approach to literacy texts to understand both form and content. The paper suggests that a stylistic approach teaches students how to look for and interpret stylistic dimensions of a text. It illustrates this approach by showing how students can compare two versions of the fairy tale, "Sleeping Beauty" (a 17th century version and a modern version for children), in order to uncover grammatical and semantic differences between the texts. In another example, it demonstrates that by comparing the first sentence of Flaubert's short story, "Un Coeur Simple," with a teacher-generated reformulated first sentence, students in an introduction to literary analysis class can learn how to use semantic analyses to gain a deeper understanding of literature. (Contains 26 references.) (SM)

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ED 481 419

A Stylistic Approach to Foreign Language Acquisition and Literary Analysis

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"Le style est l'homme même."
—Buffon (1962, p. 258)

Along with the other approaches highlighted in this volume, the notion of style can serve to bridge the gap between foreign language and literature studies that can threaten classroom effectiveness, curricular coherence, and even professional harmony. If literature is the highest form of linguistic expression, it is so in one sense precisely because it causes us to witness the workings of language, the very goal of the foreign language classroom. In literature courses, quite obviously, the notion of style enables the student to recognize, analyze, interpret, and appreciate the linguistic tools and techniques that the writer manipulates to produce meaning and structure. Less obviously, perhaps, yet no less significantly, the notion of style can be used in language courses to allow the student to recognize, analyze, and even practice the varied forms of expression used to convey a message. In both cases, the concept of style permits the student to perceive the difference between ordinary speech acts, intended to communicate a specific message efficiently through transparent expression, and literary texts, designed to suggest an additional or alternative message by highlighting and even problematizing the very means of expression.

We might say that foreign language acquisition, especially with the communicative approach, focuses on the referential function of language (the message itself), whereas literary analysis, as characterized by the seminal study of Roman Jakobson, focuses on the poetic function of language (the means of expression); each focus, however, constitutes an example of style and can be approached stylistically (1963, pp. 209–48). In more traditional terms, language acquisition may well emphasize the content of the message and literary analysis its form, but we must recognize that it is only a matter of emphasis that distinguishes content from form and that ought to distinguish, but not divide, the language classroom from its literary counterpart.[1]

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Curriculum and Coordination

At our institution, there are two intermediate-level courses that follow the four-semester basic language program and that serve as prerequisites for the major: a language and culture course and an introduction to literary analysis course. These are both multisection courses, with sections taught by advanced graduate assistants alongside tenure track and adjunct faculty. Both courses are "writing intensive"; that is to say, they involve several types of writing, they approach writing as a process, and they embrace the notion that students should not just learn to write but should learn by writing. Although we recommend that students take the language and culture course first, in practice, the two courses may be taken concurrently or in any order. Thus, while each course has particular goals, to be effective both courses must work in tandem to provide students with a coherent preparation for more advanced study of both language and literature and to provide instructors who may have little or no experience at this level a clear-cut and well-articulated approach that enhances their professional preparation. In a sense, these courses are the ultimate training ground and proving ground for the advanced graduate student, the final courses the student will teach before embarking on a career elsewhere and the most independently-fashioned of the multi-section courses in our program. Although unified by common goals and a core curriculum, each instructor develops his or her own syllabus, prepares and grades testing material independently, adds supplemental material as he or she sees fit, and may replace one of the core texts with a personal preference, usually one being worked on for a research project or the Ph.D. dissertation. Often one or more of the other instructors, including the faculty coordinator, may also choose to adopt the proposed text. Thus, not only does the course framework provide a loose mentoring system for the graduate students, who interact with faculty and staff in course meetings and frequent informal conversations, but it also provides an opportunity for faculty to discover a new text and benefit from the energy and expertise of the graduate student who chose it.

Style

Before proceeding to a demonstration of the application of a stylistic approach to both types of course, it is imperative to define the term "style." As tempting as it is to adopt the common definition of style as a "deviation" from standard expression, this concept simply does not hold up under scrutiny. As Oswald Ducrot and Tzvetan Todorov have noted in their now classic reference work, *Dictionnaire encyclopédique*

des sciences du langage, it is impossible, even with the advent of computer studies, to define what is standard expression, and, furthermore, to link it to an author's style, which could well be characterized by adherence to, rather than deviation from, common expression (1972, p. 383). Ducrot and Todorov go on to propose a highly workable definition of style based on "the choice any text must make among a certain number of expressions available in the language" (1972, p. 383), which we reformulate for our purposes as follows: *style is the choice made by a speaker or writer among the various equivalent expressions available in a language for communicating a given potential content.* We would then define the adjective "stylistic" in the broadest possible sense as the application of the above definition of style to the act of reading and interpreting the resultant choice of expressions.[2] As Gérard Genette has noted, "Identifying a unit of speech necessarily involves, at least implicitly, comparing it and contrasting it with what could be, in its place, another 'equivalent' unit, that is to say at once similar and different . . . perceiving a language, necessarily involves imagining, in the same space or in the same instant, a silence or another expression" (1968, pp. 12–13). Genette's statement provides us with the terms—comparing, contrasting, imagining—necessary for transforming our definition of "style" into an "approach." We can now go on to illustrate this "stylistic approach," first in the intermediate language and culture course, then in the introduction to literary analysis course, before coming to some general conclusions concerning the relationship between the two courses.

The Intermediate Language and Culture Course

The goals of the language and culture course are to provide students with opportunities to improve their proficiency in all four skills and to learn to interpret texts within a cultural framework, thus improving their cultural proficiency as well. It is neither a grammar review course—although it does seek to make students proficient users of tools such as a reference grammar and a dictionary—nor a traditional conversation and composition course, because the goal is not just to have students talk and write, but to encourage them to talk and write about increasingly abstract topics in a less personalized, more analytic way than is often the focus of courses in the basic language program. A variety of texts, both journalistic and literary, are read for a variety of reasons: to enhance the students' historical or cultural background, to serve as springboards for discussion, to provide models for writing, to promote vocabulary acquisition, to illustrate certain grammatical concepts, etc. Thus, while style per se is not an explicit focus of the

course, as it might be in a literature course, the notion of style still permeates the course, because all texts become a pretext for talking about language, especially the choices authors make and their impact on the reader.

Folk tales are particularly bountiful sources for language study, because the vast majority of students are already familiar with the characters and the main aspects of the plot and thus can focus more easily on the words with which the text is written as well as the social and cultural implications of the author's choices. Take, for example, Charles Perrault's *La Belle au bois dormant* [Sleeping Beauty] (1697). As an initial reading assignment, students are asked to make a list of the differences they see between the opening lines of Perrault's version of the tale and the beginning of a modern version for children; both versions are glossed for archaic or otherwise unfamiliar vocabulary and usage, such as the imperfect subjunctive.[3] Working through a comparison of the "style" of the two versions in class discussion leads to the discovery of the subtle power of language and numerous insights into the social and cultural values embodied in the stories, which in turn sets the groundwork for a better understanding of each version of the tale:

> Il était une fois un Roi et une Reine, qui étaient si fâchés de n'avoir point d'enfants, si fâchés qu'on ne saurait dire. Ils allèrent à toutes les eaux du monde; vœux, pèlerinages, menues dévotions, tout fut mis en œuvre, et rien n'y faisait. Enfin pourtant la Reine devint grosse, et accoucha d'une fille: on fit un beau Baptême; on donna pour Marraines à la petite Princesse toutes les Fées qu'on pût trouver dans le Pays (il s'en trouva sept), afin que chacune d'elles lui faisant un don, comme c'était la coutume des Fées en ce temps-là, la Princesse eût par ce moyen toutes les perfections imaginables.
>
> [Once upon a time, there were a King and Queen who were so distressed not to have any children, so distressed that it was beyond words. They went to all of the waters in the world; vows, pilgrimages, small devotions, everything was tried and nothing worked. Finally, however, the Queen became pregnant and had a daughter: a beautiful Baptism was held; they chose as Godmothers for the little Princess all of the Fairies that could be found in the Land (there were seven of them), so that each of them giving her a gift, as was the Fairies' custom at that time, the Princess would have by this means every imaginable perfection (Perrault 1981, p. 131).]
>
> Il y a bien longtemps vivaient un roi et une reine qui étaient désolés de n'avoir pas d'enfant. Aussi leur joie fut-elle grande lorsque leur

naquit une petite fille. Ils donnèrent une belle fête pour son baptême et lui choisirent pour marraines toutes les fées du pays. Il s'en trouva sept. Chacune fit un don à la petite princesse.

[A very long time ago lived a king and queen who were sorry not to have a child. Thus great was their joy when was born to them a daughter. They gave a beautiful party for her baptism and chose as godmothers all of the country's fairies. There were seven of them. Each gave a gift to the little princess (Izawa and Hijikata 1967, p. 3).]

When asked during class discussion about differences between the two versions, students invariably begin by noting the greater length of the Perrault version, a distinction that enables the instructor to pursue more substantive questions such as what additional information accounts for this difference. Asking students, for example, to reiterate the content of the second sentence of the Perrault version (missing in the modern text), not only gives the instructor the means of checking on reading comprehension and providing cultural background on concepts such as pilgrimages, it affords the students the opportunity to produce new language through reformulation and to comprehend the extent of the royal couple's efforts to have a child.

Another difference students readily note between the two versions is the use of repetition in the Perrault text, a feature that the instructor can stress by further questioning, which can lead to valuable grammatical and semantic distinctions. The instructor can ask, for example, which word is repeated in the second sentence and what grammatical forms it takes. This leads to the distinction between *toutes* used as an adjective, which agrees with a noun, and *tout* as an invariable pronoun (a point covered in the grammar review for the week). A check on students' comprehension of this distinction can be made by asking them which form of *tout* is repeated elsewhere in the passage, thereby leading them to two further examples of adjectives in "toutes les Fées" and "toutes les perfections." The accumulation of the word *tout*, whatever its grammatical form, reinforces the students' growing perception of the extreme nature of the royal couple's efforts and thus to a definition of their character traits.

Asking the students about other repetitions in the Perrault text will lead them quite naturally to focus on the adjectives used in the first sentence of each version to describe the royal couple's emotional reaction to their childlessness: *fâché* [distressed] in the Perrault version (the repetition itself underscoring the distress), versus *désolé* [sorry] in the other. It should then be pointed out that, although the French word *fâché* does not always connote anger, as it frequently does in

contemporary usage, but merely a degree of unhappiness (particularly in the seventeenth century), it is nonetheless a stronger term than *désolé*. This is an important semantic lesson, because students see not only that word usage changes over time, but that synonyms are not exact equivalents and may have different connotations or convey a different sense of force. To emphasize this point, students are asked as a homework assignment to use a dictionary to construct a list of adjectives suggesting unhappiness and then to write a series of sentences illustrating the differences between them. Students thus have the opportunity to broaden their vocabulary in a context that confirms the necessity of consulting a dictionary when reading/writing to distinguish between the connotations of certain words. This discriminatory approach is an important goal of the course, as we attempt to move students from reading for the gist or for precise information to reading in a more analytical way.

A further difference between the two versions that is readily perceived by students is the use of capitalization in the Perrault text. By asking what types of nouns the capitalized words entail, the instructor leads students to note that they refer to certain roles (King, Queen, Princess, Fairies), places (Land), and events (Baptism) that pertain to the royal couple, thus strengthening the notion that Perrault's couple (and perhaps by extension the institution of the monarchy) is self-important and hierarchical. On a cultural and historical level, the self-centered nature of the king and queen and their desperate desire for an heir (even a daughter!) provides the students with an insight, and the instructor with a potential introduction, into the notion of the consolidation of the monarchy that occurred in France during the seventeenth century.

In addition to the greater length of the Perrault passage, students are also struck by the greater length of its sentences, probably because the length and complexity create obstacles for easy reading. This is particularly true for Perrault's third sentence, the content of which (the birth of the princess, the baptismal feast, and the invitation to the seven fairies) is included in four separate sentences in the modern version. By asking what conjunction is used to join sentences in the Perrault passage, the instructor can not only explore the use of the subjunctive with *afin que* [so that] (and point out the archaic use of the imperfect subjunctive here), but can also ask students what it implies about the motives of the king and queen. It becomes clear that they have invited the fairies "in order to" obtain gifts, which is reinforced by the expression *par ce moyen* [by this means]. Thus, it is progressively and readily becoming clear that the Perrault text is not just longer, but that what is included in the additional length affects our

perception of the royal couple and the institution of the monarchy as self-centered and self-serving.

When asked about differences between the descriptions of the princess's birth in the two texts, the students note that, in the modern version, "a daughter was born to them," while in the seventeenth-century text the queen "gave birth to a daughter." As subject of the sentence, Perrault's queen is an active participant in the birth, and thus the grammar of the text reinforces that idea that the king and queen took charge, and through their determined, perhaps desperate efforts (vows, pilgrimages, devotions) finally achieved what they desired. At the same time, when asked about the couple's emotional reactions to the birth in the Perrault passage, the students realize that they are not described, but relegated to what Genette (1968) would term a "silence," which is all the more perceptible by comparison with the "joy" expressed in the other version. The modern couple, reduced to the role of indirect object in the sentence describing the birth, seems to play no active part in this seemingly "magical" event, except to rejoice. In fact, the structure of the sentence describing their joy reduces their active role even more, because not they, but the joy itself, is the grammatical subject—a fact that is hard to overlook given the subject/verb inversion necessitated by the opening conjunction *aussi* [thus]. Therefore, this sentence is useful in helping students see differences between the presentation of the king and queen in the different versions of the fairy tale. It also provides a clear and concrete example of a semantic/syntactic notion that bedevils most students at the intermediate level, notably that *aussi* as the first word of a sentence means "thus," not "also," as is does anywhere else in a sentence, and that its use at the beginning of a sentence entails an inversion whose effect is to emphasize the sentences' subject, a stylistic choice that the preceding analysis has shown is not without impact on the reader. To reinforce this point, the instructor can ask the students to rewrite the sentence as homework, using another expression for "thus," and to compare their sentence with the original in terms of its grammatical structure and the impact of that structure on the presentation of the royal couple. They can also be encouraged to find equivalent French expressions for "also," highly useful because it is a key transitional term of high frequency in student compositions.

There are other significant grammatical differences between the two versions of the fairy tale as well, which the instructor can get to by asking the students about differences in pronouns. For example, while the royal couple in the modern version is portrayed in a passive light up through their daughter's birth, after that point they become active, both in terms of what they do and how they are represented

grammatically: **They** gave a beautiful party and chose the fairies for the princess's godmothers. Perrault's royal couple, however, after the birth of the princess, share the stage grammatically with the impersonal pronoun *on*, which can mean "one," "they," or even "we," and which thus adds a level of ambiguity that is absent from the modern text. Students can then be asked to consider the implications and effects of the impersonality and ambiguity that result from this pronoun choice. For example, unlike the statement "ils firent un beau Baptême," which contains a personal pronoun whose antecedent is unequivocal, the statement "on fit un beau Baptême," can be read not only as "they held a beautiful Baptism," but also as either "one held a beautiful Baptism," or as "a beautiful Baptism was held." In this particular case, the use of *on* seems to underline the hierarchy of the royal court—for, while the "beautiful Baptism" was undoubtedly the royal couple's idea, it was most likely others who did the work and attended to the details. In another case, the fact that the revelation that all of the fairies "qu'on pût trouver" [that could be found] were chosen as godmothers contains the impersonal *on* might be seen to exculpate the parents for the responsibility of having neglected anyone, because it is not clear that the oversight was directly their responsibility. By analyzing the use of pronouns in this short text, students gain an appreciation not only for the difference between personal and impersonal pronouns, but also for the subtleties and ambiguities introduced by the choice of a pronoun such as *on*.

The instructor can continue to work with pronouns by having the students identify their antecedents, a surprisingly difficult grammar task and an essential skill in reading comprehension. In addition to the rare combination of a noun and a pronoun in tandem necessitated by the inversion in "aussi leur joie fut-elle grande," locating the antecedents for "leur naquit" and "lui choisirent" illustrates the necessity of looking to the preceding sentence and thus reading a block of text, not just a segment. Moreover, the recurrence of "il s'en trouva sept" (in both versions) reminds students of the use of *en* with numbers.

As follow-up activities, students are asked to write a paragraph describing the personalities/attitudes/emotions of the two royal couples and then to write their own introduction to "Sleeping Beauty" based on what they have learned in comparing the Perrault and the modern versions and on their own sense of what the king and queen were like. Next, working individually or in small groups in class, they should be asked to conduct a similar comparison of a different episode from the two versions of this fairy tale or to compare it to a version with which they are already familiar. American students who have seen the Disney movie or read a "sanitized" modern version are surprised, for example,

to see that Perrault's tale doesn't end with the princess's awakening and marriage to the prince. Their introduction to the seventeenth-century version of the tale, which ends with the jealous mother of the prince (who is by then the king) throwing herself into a vat crawling with vipers after having been thwarted in her efforts to have the daughter-in-law and grandchildren killed, opens numerous questions as to intended audience as well as cross-cultural and cross-secular differences and thus provides an excellent springboard for further discussion.

In this series of exercises, students have uncovered, in context, a number of lexical and grammatical points, all of which contribute to the readers' understanding, appreciation, and interpretation of the texts—in other words, they have been engaged in an analysis of style. Granted, their focus has been on reading and writing, not on understanding the style of a particular author or the conventions of a given period, but such an exercise effectively prepares them to consider and to analyze style in an explicitly literary context by showing them how to look for and how to interpret the types of choice authors make that constitute their unique styles.

The Literary Analysis Course

Unlike a folk tale such as *La Belle au bois dormant*, which often has several versions whose different styles can be compared, most literary works are unique and have no alternative versions.[4] For any given portion of the work, however, following the implications of Genette's earlier statement that style amounts to a choice, the instructor can simply "imagine" another, equivalent expression. For example, in approaching Gustave Flaubert's masterful short story, *Un Coeur simple* [A Simple Heart], which depicts the bleak life of a country servant in nineteenth-century France, we again decided to focus on the opening sentence, which reads as follows:

> Pendant un demi-siècle, les bourgeoises de Pont-l'Évêque envièrent à Mme Aubain sa servante Félicité. [For a half-century, the bourgeois women of Pont-l'Évêque envied Madame Aubain for her servant Félicité (1952, p. 591).]

At first reading the sentence seems straightforward enough: it introduces the main characters, the servant Félicité and her mistress Madame Aubain, while situating them in time (a half-century) and space (Pont-l'Évêque in Flaubert's beloved Normandy), a hallmark of French realist fiction. It is only when one imagines an equivalent expression for the same information, however, that one comes to appreciate the layers of additional meaning brought out by Flaubert's style.

Based on the stylistic points the instructor intends to bring out (or simply as a means of discovering the subtleties of Flaubert's style), he or she can construct an alternative sentence, such as the following:

> Félicité travailla chez Mme Aubain à Pont-l'Évêque pendant cinquante ans. [Félicité worked for Madame Aubain in Pont-l'Évêque for fifty years.]

As with the examples from *La Belle au bois dormant* explored in the language and culture course, the literature course instructor should assign both glossed texts as an initial reading task and ask the students to make a list of differences they perceive between the two versions in preparation for class discussion.[5] Since we contend that a literature course is also a language course, we believe strongly that the instructor should avoid lecturing as much as possible at this level (always a temptation when "style" is involved) and instead have the students work through the passage in order to encourage their ongoing practice of all four language skills and to develop their own techniques of literary and cultural analysis. Whereas the language instructor often uses questions involving content (at a simple level) to get at points of language, the literature instructor can often use questions involving grammar to get at points of content (at a deeper level). Indeed, we have found that notions of grammar provide a highly effective ordering principle for discussing a text as dense and complex as the one in question from Flaubert's *Un coeur simple* and its imagined alternative.

In order to begin with an overview of the entire sentence and to provide an overall organization for the discussion, the instructor first asks the students to focus on the difference in **syntax** or sentence structure between the two versions. The fact that the servant Félicité is last in Flaubert's version and first in the imagined one is obvious, and, when asked about possible implications, the students invariably draw a link between the concrete detail of position in the sentence and the more abstract notion of position in society, an important perspective for reading the rest of the tale and, indeed, much of French realist fiction.

The instructor then asks what Félicité's **grammatical role** is in each sentence, and the students readily note a change from Flaubert's sentence, in which she is a direct object, to the alternative, in which she is the subject. Prompted by further questioning about implications, the students easily seize the connection between the dominant role of a subject and secondary role of an object in both the sentence and society. The main literary question involves, of course, the effect or function of Flaubert's choices of expression, the very style of

which paints Félicité as a mere object whose subordinate place in society is mirrored by that in the sentence, both syntactically and grammatically.

Further aspects of grammar can be explored by asking the students what differences they see between the way the relationship between Félicité and Mme Aubain is depicted in each case. They have little trouble in seeing, grasping, and expressing the notion that the verb *travailla* [worked for] in the alternate sentence implies a degree of action and even freedom that Flaubert's nominal expression "her servant" denies to Félicité, because the noun points to a fixed role. When asked about the implications of the possessive pronoun "her," the grammatical nomenclature itself leads students to the conclusion that Félicité is no more than a "possession" to Mme Aubain.

By this point in the discussion, since a main direction has been established and has gained some momentum, the order of subsequent points is less important. Based on our experience, however, the instructor may now want to ask about the difference in the use of names (not between the sentences, but between the two characters), that is, a **vocabulary** distinction. Students can be guided by comparison with the very classroom situation in which the discussion is taking place and in which the students are likely referred to by first name and the instructor by title and last name. When asked why this is so, the students perceive and articulate notions of social distance and hierarchy that also pertain to the relationship between Félicité and Mme Aubain (but in far more permanent fashion, the instructor should be quick to point out or tease out!). In short, for the servant, the first name alone is used, implying a life-long reduction in identity, whereas Madame Aubain's social status warrants a title and a last name.

The value of the two names, Madame Aubain and Félicité, can also be approached in its own right. Even though they were not changed in the alternate version of the sentence, to maintain a necessary degree of similarity, Flaubert had to choose the two names, and they thus fall under the notion of style. At this level, students do not have enough language at their disposal to judge the suggestiveness of proper names (onomastics), but again in this case the notion can be explored with careful questioning: When reminded that Aubain might mean "in the bath" [*au bain*] and asked what that might imply, some students will see an allusion to her idle lifestyle and dependency on Félicité's attentions. If the instructor uses a dictionary entry to point out that the name Félicité has connotations of religious bliss, the students can then use the theme of religion, also suggested in the toponym Pont-L'Évêque [Bishop's Bridge], as a guideline for further reading, and, at the same time, they will be introduced to the essential (yet often

overlooked) necessity of using the dictionary for reading any type of text, especially literature.

To this point the student has already witnessed six examples where the style alone, the linguistic features of syntax, grammar (twice), and vocabulary (three times), beyond the overt content, has suggested the strict hierarchy governing class relationships in nineteenth-century France along with the presence of religion that permeates this highly Catholic country. Highlighting the linguistic terms, which the students have already used in language courses (even those prior to the intermediate level), gives them the confidence that they already possess the essential tools of literary analysis. At the same time, this focus on language lends continuity to the foreign-language curriculum: in short, the literature course is also a language course.

We can next turn to another difference between the two sentences, involving what Genette (1968) terms a "silence" or what may more commonly be called an "absence," by asking students what is missing in the alternative version. They readily recognize that the subject of Flaubert's sentence, the "bourgeois women," has disappeared altogether from the alternate text and with it the suggestion of class content that it entails. Furthermore, as the instructor may point out or work through with further questions (depending on time), Flaubert's verb, "envied," suggests a significant aspect of the motivations and mechanisms governing the bourgeois class: the desire for someone else's "possessions," a desire based more on what someone else has than on what one really wants.

Seen now in its entirety, Flaubert's sentence structure mirrors the social structure of provincial France, in which the servant is dependent on the mistress, who herself exists in function of the group or class to which she belongs and which determines the prevailing value system, based on possessions, fueled by jealousy, and sustained by gossip.

Another lexical difference that strikes the students but whose function or meaning proves more difficult for them to explain involves the distinction between "a half-century" in Flaubert's sentence and "fifty years" in the alternative version. Unlike the countable units (years), which imply the possibility of difference and change, a "half-century" seems more uniform, permanent, and static. The instructor may point out, as an introduction to further reading of the tale, that Félicité's duties, like her wages, remain the same throughout her life. Even the events and encounters of her life betray a remarkably consistent pattern of attaching herself to someone, who then leaves her. This pattern is reinforced, then transcended by the parrot, Loulou, the stuffed remains of which Félicité is able to keep and idolize even after

it dies, finally becoming confused, then conjoined with the Holy Ghost in Félicité's religiously rich imagination.

To this point, the discussion has focused on the ideas suggested by Flaubert's linguistic choices, what is signified, rather than on the "signifiers," the material properties of the words themselves, the **sounds, rhythm,** and **typography** of the sentences that constitute their "poetry." If the students have already studied poetry in the course, as ours have, or if the instructor would like to use this sentence to introduce poetic properties, it is necessary to use considerable guidance. We propose that the instructor begin by aligning the different word groupings of the sentence one above the other, as in a poem:

Pendant un demi-siècle,
les bourgeoises de Pont-l'Évêque
envièrent à Mme Aubain
sa servante Félicité.

The arrangement itself causes the students to note that the sentence is divided somewhat equally into four segments of roughly eight syllables each (pronouncing Mme as Madame and counting the mute e's, as one does in French poetry). The instructor can point out that the regular rhythm may well suggest the regularity and monotony of Félicité's life, but at the same time it creates a sense of harmony that elevates the text above that life into the realm of art. This "poetic" quality is further suggested by the internal rhyme in French between *siècle* and *Pont-l'Évêque*, the occurrence of which is highlighted by the comma after *siècle*. Even Félicité's name, when viewed in terms of its phonemes, has a certain harmony based on the repetition of the vowel [i] inserted between that of the vowel [é]. Although Félicité is relegated to the lowest and last place in the social hierarchy, she stands out in the text. The instructor can point out that this tension between life and literature is necessary to a full appreciation of Flaubert's vision of human existence, a vision that emerges only through consideration of his style, which he himself defined as "an absolute manner of seeing things" [*une manière absolue de voir les choses*] (1926, II, p. 346).

At this point, just when we have seemingly extracted every drop of substantive marrow from the text, we can apply the stylistic approach from a different angle. Having focused on the **differences** between Flaubert's sentence and our alternative expressions, we can nonetheless explore essential **similarities** between the two versions. In "dialectical" fashion, we can now use the similar points between the alternate expressions to imagine another alternative that differs from both. When asked to describe similarities, students find both versions, for example, to be "objective," and, indeed, both are devoid of overt

commentary by the narrator on the one hand and of figurative speech on the other. If the students have already studied other authors, the instructor can ask them to draw a parallel with, say, a Balzac story, where the narrator might claim that Félicité "ressemble à toutes les femmes qui ont eu des malheurs" [resembles all women who have had problems] and proclaim that "ce drame n'est ni une fiction, ni un roman. All is true . . ." [This drama is neither fiction nor a novel. All is true [sic] . . .].[6] Here Balzac's generalizations ("All"), the conclusions ("problems"), allusions to the text itself ("this drama"), and use of another language ("All is true") help the student to appreciate the subtlety of Flaubert's famous impersonal narration. Victor Hugo, on the other hand, might well characterize Madame Aubain as *un mastodonte* [elephant] or *cette montagne...de chair* [this mountain of flesh].[7] Here the flagrant use of simile and hyperbole can serve to illustrate Flaubert's more restrained use of figurative language.

In continuing our comparison of Flaubert's text with our initial alternative, the instructor can now ask the students what similarities they see between the verbs in both versions. The rather obvious answer that both are in the simple past (a literary tense) and in the third person leads students to an important discovery about the conventions of nineteenth-century narration and their foregrounding of the narrator; as Roland Barthes puts it: "Le passé simple et la troisième personne du Roman, ne sont rien d'autre que ce geste fatal par lequel l'écrivain montre du doigt le masque qu'il porte" [The simple past and the third person of the novel, are nothing more than the fatal gesture by which the writer points his finger at the mask he is wearing] (1964, p. 37). Following this lead, the instructor can write on the board a transformation of the alternative sentence or ask the students to do so, using the first-person and the present tense of the verb *travailler* [to work]; unlike rewriting Flaubert's initial sentence, a task simply too complex for most students at this level, rewriting the alternative in the present is within their reach, with a little coaching on the use of *depuis* [for] for actions continuing into the present:

> Je travaille chez Mme Aubain à Pont-l'Évêque depuis 50 ans. [I've been working for Madame Aubain in Pont-l'Évêque for fifty years.]

When asked about the effect of this change, the students readily note that the loss in information (the character's name) is more than compensated for by a gain in intimacy (through the first person) and freedom (the present tense, unlike the past, implies a future open to change). Once again the instructor can reiterate the notion that differences in literary technique amount to matters of language, primarily grammar, involving different verb tenses and pronouns. Because a

distant third-person perspective that nonetheless produces privileged insights into an individual's personal life is not to be had in reality (after all, just who has been watching Félicité from a distance during fifty years?), the student can appreciate Barthes' statement above that such a narrative stance suggests literature not life. Barthes' statement was itself prefigured by Jean-Paul Sartre's judgment that such a position reflects a religious, bourgeois vision of life that deprives the character of existential freedom.[8] More important, from our standpoint, the students can appreciate Flaubert's use of these conventions to create a certain distance, replicate a feeling for the individual's isolation and impotence in human existence, and produce a sense of the narrator's god-like power that Flaubert sought in the realm of art:

> L'artiste doit être dans son œuvre comme Dieu dans la création, invisible et tout-puissant; qu'on le sente partout, mais qu'on ne le voie pas. [The artist should be like God in creation, invisible and all-powerful; one should feel him throughout, but see him nowhere (1926, IV, p. 164).]

To give students a further appreciation for the suggestive power not only of Flaubert's style but of language in general, we suggest a follow-up writing exercise, even if only a brief one. Students are assigned or asked to pick any sentence or complete clause from Part I of *Un Coeur simple* and to rewrite it. Having several students put their alternatives on the blackboard enables the instructor to work through grammatical and lexical points, as well as stylistic features, with the class. We frequently assign the clause "Elle se levait dès l'aube, pour ne pas manquer la messe..." [She would get up at dawn so as not to miss mass]. Among the numerous responses we have received, two are quite typical: "Elle s'est levée le matin pour aller à la messe..." [She got up in the morning to go to mass] and "Elle ne voulait pas manquer la messe, parce qu'elle était très religieuse..."[She didn't want to miss mass because she was very religious]. Several linguistic points in the original are brought out by comparison with the alternatives, namely, the necessity of using the imperfect tense for describing repeated actions (and Félicité is a creature of habit) and the early hour denoted by "dès l'aube"(and Félicité is an early riser). Among additional stylistic features that emerge from comparison of the alternatives to Flaubert's text are the differences between "aller à la messe" [to go to mass] and "ne pas manquer la messe" [not to miss mass] (which implies a sense of duty typical of Félicité) and "elle était religieuse" [she was religious] (which implies an explicit judgment that Flaubert usually leaves unstated, engaging the reader to draw the appropriate conclusion from the factual detail). This brief exercise thus enables

students not only to work through the subtleties of language but to witness its power when wielded by a master like Flaubert.

In addition to the understanding of Flaubert's art that emerges from the stylistic approach based on alternative expressions, the students are also exposed somewhat painlessly to all of the elements of the dreaded "explication de texte." In effect, they have seen firsthand how literary analysis involves the notions of *situation* (the expository function of the first sentence), *narration* (the effect of third-person narration), *vocabulary* (Flaubert's suggestive use of names), *syntax* (the order of the first sentence, which replicates that of society's hierarchy), *composition* (the order of the passage in the first example, the same as syntax, since the passage is but one sentence), *grammar* (the effect of the past tense in limiting the character's freedom), as well as *sounds* (the symmetry of the vowels in Félicité's name), *rhythm* (the regular divisions of Flaubert's first sentence), and *typography* (the highlighting created by capitalization and punctuation), which elevate the prosaic sentence to the level of poetry.[9] Furthermore, rather than learn these categories a priori, then impose them like a cookie cutter on the text, the students have seen the notions emerge inductively from the concrete examples in the discussion, an approach to learning that, in our opinion, should find its way throughout the entire foreign-language curriculum. The students have also seen that all of the elements of literary analysis are defined by linguistic terms and concepts they have already encountered in their language courses, which gives them a sense of personal confidence and curricular continuity.

Conclusion

By utilizing a simplified yet rigorous and effective approach to texts, based on the comparison of two versions of the same textual segment, either from preexistent or imagined sources, we can open up the notion of style to make it accessible to students at the intermediate level. Such a stylistic approach empowers students, because it enables them not only to witness, analyze, and appreciate the workings of language but also to practice various forms of expression. The stylistic approach enhances the development of all five skills—reading, writing, listening, speaking, and culture—while encouraging students to utilize the reference grammar and the dictionary, the two most essential tools for making their way beyond the intermediate level. Although the notion of style is primarily studied in language courses to point out linguistic usage and in literature courses to uncover patterns of expression that lend the work its meaning and structure, the language course instructor invariably points out the literary function of the

expression, and the literature instructor the linguistic basis of the expression. The similarity of approaches points to the compatibility of the courses and helps bridge the potential gaps between the two parts of the curriculum, while fostering exchange between faculty and graduate students of various types of training and persuasion, and thus promoting a unified vision of the profession.

Notes

1. Numerous scholars, some trained in second-language acquisition, others in literature, have examined this question of the importance of establishing connections between foreign language learning and foreign language literature. For example, see Barnett 1991; Kramsch 1985; Rice 1991; Rochette-Ozzello 1978; Schofer 1984; Schultz 1996. For a list of further studies that focus on "style, form, and voice within a student-centered pedagogy," see Kramsch and Kramsch 2000, p. 569.
2. This definition of "stylistic" stands apart from more specific definitions of the field of stylistics by, for example, Charles Bally (1909) and Leo Spitzer (1970) or the term as it is applied to advanced courses designed to polish off a students' command of the language.
3. Indeed, the reader we use, *Images* (Martin and Berg [1990] 1997), has both versions of the tale's beginning, along with questions involving language and style.
4. Nonetheless, some literary scholars study the linguistic variations in different editions of the same work, and one can always compare similar works or adaptations of a work in different media, such as a story and a film version of it.
5. The reader we use, *Poèmes, Pièces, Prose* (Schofer, Rice, and Berg 1973), has a glossed version of the entire tale, along with questions involving style.
6. These examples come from the narrator's description of Madame Vauquer at the beginning of *Le Père Goriot*.
7. These examples are from the narrator's description of Madame Thénardier in Hugo, p. 419.
8. See *Qu'est-ce que la littérature*, pp. 177–79 and "M. François Mauriac et la liberté" in *Situations I*, pp. 36–57.
9. One could now study the sentence in terms of its relations with other parts of the text. See, for example, Berg and Martin 1995.

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